

CHAPTER XI.
OBJECTS OF INTEREST.

**Some striking peculiarities noticed in the Temple
Ghee and its importance in the Temple.**

As soon as the devotee enters the temple he meets with lamps fed with ghee in every shrine including the big Thiruvakshi, and other various lamps in other entrances; oil is taboo in this temple. For the Abishekam of the Lord, for the voluntary offerings to the Deities, for the preparation of various other kinds of Neivedyams that are also made in the Temple kitchens for the other lamps that pour forth their lustre and light up this magnificent edifice, for the many torches that are carried in their scores for the innumerable festivals of this temple, not only in the Sri Alagar Hills and Fort Areas but also when Lord Alagar camps at Madura or Vandiyur etc., leagues and leagues off, it is the Temple Ghee that would be used.

Neivedyams peculiar to this Sannadhi.

The specially ordained Neivedyams that are prepared with scrupulous care in this Sannadhi are the "உசுட்டி" Rotti and "ஸட்டு" Laddu served with butter for the Visvaroopā Darsan, the rice cake or Dosai for the Seva Kalam, and the Samba for the Ardhajama for which the devotees would be waiting in a big congregation or Goshti. Akara Vadisal is another Neivedhyam that is especially famous here, and has a legend behind it. When Sri Godha was here she offered this Neivedhyam most pleasing to her Lord Sundararaja "manasaically" which was practically and actually fulfilled and performed laterly by Sri Ramanuja centuries afterwards, by which fulfilment of Sri Andal's Manasic vow Sri Ramanuja earned the title of "Koil Annan". This episode and incident is referred to else where in these notes.

Special offerings:

It would be also interesting to note what kind of Neivedyams or Special offerings were made on special occasions. A few items are noted below:

i. *Adi Car Festival*: A few of the items are: 18 Thaligais of Rice (One Thaligai is equal to one Padakku of Rice), 5 Kari Amudhus, and 5 Thiruppaniyarams, Thiru-kkularpani etc. M. E. R. 90 of '29 (1513 A. D.)

ii. *Thalai Aruvi Festival*: (at Sri Hanuman Koil Mandagappadi) - M. R. 285 of '29. A few of the varieties are 50 Adirasams, 50 Vadais, 50 Suhiyans, 6 Marakkals of Pori Amudhu, 2 Pongal Tattu Thaligais and 2 Thaligais of Dadhiyodhanam.

iii. *Monthly Viseshappadis*: (at the four pillared Mandapam at Yathirajan square). The Neivedhyam offered on these occasions were 12 Paniyarams, and 2 Padis of Vadapparuppu.

iv. Varanasi Varadappa Annarayyan's kattalai (Achyuta Deva Maharaja's officer) offered 15 Thaligais of rice at one padakku of Rice per Taligai.

v. *Uthiram* (Monthly): The Neivedhyams were as in the monthly Viseshappadis.- M. E. R. 301 of '30.

vi. *Vaikasi Mandagappadi*: (at the four pillared Mandapam)- 200 Adirasams, 200 Vadais, 200 Suhiyans and 2 Kalams of Pori Amudhu.- M. E. R. 285 of '30 (1656 A. D.)

vii. *Mandagappadi* (Before Vedantachari's Sannadhi): The Neivedhyams offered in this mandagappadi were on a very grand scale.- M. E. R. 28 of '32 (1665 A. D.)

Puli-odarai	8 Kalams	Panagam	40 Kalams
Dhadiodhanam	8 Kalams	Adaikkai amudhu	1600
Pori amudhu	8 Kalams	Ilai amudhu	1600
Paniyarams	1600	Sandanam	16
Adirasams	1600	Plantain fruits etc. etc.	
Vadais	1600		
Suhiyans	1600		
Thulasi.			

It is common in every Vaishnavite Temple that the Prasadam of Thulasi would be distributed in the Sannadhi after the Aradhanas are over; but in this Then Thiruppathi as in Vada

Thiruppathi, Thulasi is not given to the devotee, the expression "அதர் மணம் கொடார் அரங்கன் இடம் கொடார்" (மணம் = துளி) has become a universal proverb in the Tamil World. All the Nirmalyam flowers of the Lord were hence being thrown in a well here called "Malai Kinaru" (q. v.) which can be seen to this day.

Paricharakas.

Until quite recently the Madappali Neivedhyams are stated to have been prepared by Smartha Cooks and seems to have been a special feature here.

"Vibuthi Prasadams".

Orthodox Vaishnavas do not wear Vibuthi or distribute it to others. In this Temple the distribution of Vibuthi Prasadam in Sri Vinayakar's Sannadhi and in Sri Kshethrapalaka's Sannadhi by the priests of the Temple is a noteworthy feature.

Animal Sacrifice.

Enquiry from learned men go to show that no where is an animal sacrifice made, either to Vaishnavite deities or to the Higher deities of the Saivaite hierarchy. It is also stated that Karruppanna Swami of Padinettampadi is a deity to whom such sacrifices should not be made. But we see every year sheep are slaughtered in their thousands besides other kinds of sacrifice such as fowls etc, within the Temple area. If these sacrifices are not for Sri Lord Sundararaja or for Sri Karupanna Swami to whom else are these sacrifices made is a problem for investigation. If the devotee is questioned about this, he would say "I made a vow to Padinettampadian. My prayers were heard by him and I am offering the sheep in sacrifice in fulfilment of my vow." The slaughter of the sheep in their thousands within the premises of Thirumalirunjolaimalai Temple is a problem difficult for solution as so many other problems here are.

Thirumanjanam Theertham.

Lord Sundararaja is being given his Abishekam and sacred bath only with the waters of Sri Noopuraganga with

the norma already noted (vide p. 244 supra.). These norma have been copied in the North Thiruppathi also. At first in that Kshetra the Thirumanjana water was being brought from the Papanasa water falls by the Thirumalai Nambi service holder there. Feeling that it was rather onerous, Sri Alavandar directed its discontinuance and permitted the use of the well water after obtaining the Lord's permission for the same. Here no other water but that of the Noopura Ganga should be used.

Perspiration.

Some twenty or twenty-five years ago when the heat was unbearable a few drops of perspiration are stated to have been noticed in the body of the Lord's idol by the Archakas and shown to the members of the Temple committee and this was then considered to be a bad omen. Necessary purificatory ceremonies are stated to have been performed. It is stated in the Agamas that the appearance of drops of tears in the eyes or drops of perspiration on the body of the idol always foretell some future calamities and this would be noticed only in those temples where the Lord is in his full Sannidhya and the poojas are strictly in observance.

Arayar Seva.

The word Arayar by itself means அரசன் or King. அரசன் is its significance when the word is used in connection with this institution. The Arayars were a particular class of Kainkaryaparals attached to this institution whose duty it was to recite the Prabandams tuned to music and accompanied with "Abhinayam" in the presence of the assembled devotees in the Sabha Mandapam of the Lord when he presides over it. 'Arayars' are referred to in M. E. R. 277 and 278 of '30. Sri Periyalvar in his Pasurams refers to these hills as "அரையன் மலை."

Prarthanas or Vows.

In fulfilment of his vows the devotee performs certain Prarthanas in this temple which are no where else to be seen in the whole religious world. So ancient and immemorial have been these kinds of Prarthanas that their origin is lost in obscurity. They are very peculiar in nature, and defy explanation or investigation. A mystical halo seems to surround them. So far, none has been able to unravel their mysteries, though many have been the infructuous attempts to probe into their secrets. These Prarthanas are the following.

Water Syringe.

A bag is formed out of the viscera of the newly sacrificed goat with a small narrow nozzle outlet. This bag is filled with water scented with rose water or other valuable scented essences. Often times the same is coloured with Turmeric. The devotee undertakes a vow of fast and prayer for a fortnight before the Chitra Pournima, and on the day of the Pournima when the Lord enters the river Vaigai at Madura these devotees, composed of all classes of people without any distinction of caste such as approachables or unapproachables, touchables or untouchables, gather at a certain Mandapam known as Ramarayar Mandapam and by pressing the bag of water syringe the water therein through the nozzle so that the water so forced out bathes the Lord, his Vahana and the Priest, when he in procession enters the said Mandapam. This generally goes on for 5 or 6 minutes. When thousands of bags are so syringed simultaneously from all around, the whole area would appear to have undergone a cloud burst as it were.

The Three.

A mammoth cone-like torch made fully of cloths and good clean rags and some 3 to 5 feet or so in height and about 6 inches to 18 inches in diameter at the base strongly stitched and tied and auspiciously coloured over with turmeric

and spotted with saffron etc, is fed and lighted with ghee constantly at the base portion. The devotee who takes the vow fasts and prays for fourteen days before the Chitra Pournami or Adi Amavasya and on the Pournima or Amavasya day appears before the Lord and dances in ecstasy with the Lighted Thiree. The heat generated, the light and flame thrown out and wafted, the smoke and smell emanating both with the dance and the wind and bodily oscillations would not be bearable under normal circumstances.

The Coir Whip.

This is generally from 5 to 10 ft. in length. It is made with a tapering end, the handle portion being generally $1\frac{1}{2}$ " to $2\frac{1}{2}$ " in diameter. Steeped and dried in turmeric water, the devotee that takes the vow as aforesaid starts on his pilgrimage to the Lord's shrine with the whip on hand. At every few steps, he stops and dances with the name of the Lord "Govinda" in his lips and mercilessly lashes himself with the rope in his hand which produces a tremendous splashing noise.

The sword and the Bill hook:

Some devotees after the observance of fast and prayer as stated above take up a sword or Bill hook and march on dancing and pronouncing the Lord's name "Govinda, Govinda"

The Bull and the Big drum.

Another class of devotees drives a Bull with a big drum placed on it. Playing upon the drum, and praising the Lord's name in chorus with a big following they go their way to worship the Lord.

The Komali etc Show.

Yet others there are who dress themselves in a quaint manner, don a ludicrous Komali cap on their heads, hide their faces with a false artificial one made hedious by a set of imitation teeth of two rows of small conch shells strung in rows (காசியா) and like the above sets of devotees, go to worship the

Lord in batches and crowds with the name of the Lord "Govinda" on their lips.

Some give the following origin to the above peculiar vows. It is stated that in ages gone by, these parts of the country were vast and wild forest regions infested with beasts and wild animals. And so when the processional deity had to be taken out once a year, the wilds had to be cleared, the wild animals had to be terrified out and the hot sand tracts had to be kept cool for walking by being syringed with water all of which customary Kainkaryams are stated to be continued to this day the *raison d'être* for the same having been forgotten.

Other Vows.

Curious, and many of them unusual (so far as other institutions are concerned, but here quite common), are the forms the vows of devotees do assume. The ex voto cradles at the Padinettampadi and other Sannadhis represent the grateful recognition of childless ladies who had their prayers for the birth of children heard and gratified. The painted babies are also for a similar purpose and often for the infantile diseases duly cured by the grace of the deities. There are also Silver and Gold Ex Voto objects such as various parts of the body various kinds of animals, birds, reptiles, pestilential insects, arms, etc., etc., which could be in one way or another connected with the sufferings, troubles and visitations from which the devotee would have prayed for relief and which the devotee in grateful recognition of relief granted, brings to the offertory of the Lord. Tonsure ceremony i.e. the first shaving of the heads of children generally is an offering to the deities here. Subsequent shavings too when specially vowed for, offerings of live goats, fowls, cows, calves and bulls in quite a good number are also offered to the diety here as votive offerings.

Golden Vimana.

The huge Golden Vimana that adorns the Lord's Garbagriha seen for miles around, of impressive and artistic

workmanship is one of the few Vimanas in India that has commanded the admiration of the whole world.

Prayoga Chakra.

Unlike as in other Sannadhis, Sri Paramaswami has his Chakra here in the Prayoga aspect. It is stated to be an Ugra pose, observable in places where the Lord is in his full Sannidhya (p. 168 and 169 supra)

Solai Malaikkarasar.

This is the presiding aspect of the Lord of these Solai-malais or Thirumalirunjolaimalai. The idol of the Lord is in solid Gold. (p. 169 supra)

Sudarsana.

A very ancient Sannadhi, contains a very big representation of Sudarsana rarely to be met with any where else. This is a shrine possessing very great and mystic influence. (p. 176 supra)

Jwala Narasimha.

This unique sannadhi of Yoga Narasimha has already been referred to (p. 178 supra). This Stala is one of the most important for Narasimha worship.

Srirengam and Sri Alagar Hills.

There are some striking similarities between these two ancient stalas which are worthy of note and investigation. Both are Temple Cities protected by forts and battlements. The pairs of Graneries in both are similar in shape and design and structure. Sudarsana worship is in excelsis in both. The important key entrances are known as Aryan Vasal or Aryabatal vasal. Ghee alone has to be used for Neivedyams and lighting purposes in both. Smarthas have been cooking in the Madappalli. Festivals in both are almost identical. There have been "Koil Olugus" in both. Both have treasures of art in ivory. The division of Sibbandhies are almost identical in nature and their designations also such as the following are common: கோவணவர், விண்ணப்பம் செய்வர் (பாடுவார்), தழையிடுவார், திருப்பணி செய்வார் (சொடவர்), கம்பிமார், etc.

OTHER ITEMS OF INTEREST.

Sri Sundararaja Gurukula.

This Gurukulam was opened on 15-3-1940 by Sri A. Kondappa Garu, President of the H. R. E. Board, Madras. An attempt is being made to impart instructions in Vedas, Prabandhas, Tamil and English.

Spinning, Weaving and Paper making.

Attached to the Gurukula is an Industrial section where pre-vocational training is imparted. With a view to make the education useful and purposeful a system of prevocational education also is being imparted in spinning, weaving and paper-making under qualified instructors.

The Kallalagar Library.

This was opened on 29-12-36 by Sri E. V. Sundara Reddi Garu, Commissioner, H. R. E. Board, Madras. This is attached to the Gurukula and has some rare and valuable books and manuscripts worthy of attention. The volumes number about a thousand in 1941.

Sundararaja Museum.

The small "*Sundararaja Museum*" is an interesting and instructive institution. It houses some ancient and historic collections that are of high archaeological and artistic importance.

The ivory carvings from the Ivory Bedstead wrought during the reign of King Tirumal Nayak (1623-1659 A. D.) are of such exquisite workmanship that connoisseurs of art have pronounced them to be the finest they have ever seen in India or elsewhere. They defy description. They should be seen to be appreciated. The carvings of the dress on the Ivory images are so fine as illustrating the fame of the Indian fabrics so much renowned and praised in Rome and Greece. A close study of these ivory carvings will be extremely valuable. It will reveal

many interesting features of society in Pandya Nad, in the medieval periods. For, the artist in addition to his laying his hand upon themes divine and semi-divine has also extended his art to other social themes as well. One can see in this museum, the Royal personage while seated alone calm, collected and dignified; the king caught between the rival claims of more than one consort struggling for liberation from both and afraid to wound either by any injudicious choice of either of them which might provoke the ire or jealousy of the other; the minister scrupulously attired and wearing looks at once serene and sedate; the very many danseuse that charm the eyes with their quaint and variegated dresses, poses and dances and engaged with their musical instruments that seem to carry the music of centuries to our modern ears; the warrior or officer with his chest decorated with "Padakkams" of a bygone age, fleeing for his life as it were with his cloth loosened and flowing in a dishevelled manner, his head-dress about to fall, with the eye-balls protruding and nostrils wide opened that he might be enabled to breathe both through his nose and his opened mouth that betrays a parched up tongue and also showing fear depicted in every lineament of his face and frame; the superbly carved 'mithunas' a study by themselves for those versed in the school of Eros; the Cherubs, the Gandharvas and other semi divine forms carved as if they are being borne and are wafted by the clouds whereon they seem to swim and appearing to pulsate with life and energy; transcending all these forms, the images of Sri Andal in the Car, Sri Saraswathi with her Veena, and Lord Sundararaja with his consorts Sri Sridevi and Sri Bhodevi, all defy description and are all marvellous in execution of even the minutest details. Delicate in very delineation, arousing in us new and further fresh interest with their wealth of attractions in dresses, ornaments, accoutrements, coiffure, musical instruments, manners, customs etc., the assemblage of these

ivory carvings is one that any nation in any age may legitimately be proud of. Interested critics blurred by partial visions (fortunately their number is small) have no doubt made a futile attempt to suggest that these gems of art were not from Indian hands, but were due to the genius of some Italian artist. If one but cares to have a peep into our ancient history and the advancement we had in our arts and sciences, these futile suggestions would not have been even dreamt of.

The Numismatics section in the Museum contains some of the rarest of collections. Rare and ancient coins from the time of Raja Raja the Great, coins of the dynasties of the Vijayanagar and the Moghal, Empires and the various coins of the Deccan Kingdoms are all worthy of study. For the young student even modern coins give him attraction in these days of kaleidoscopic changes of histories and geographies.

The grinding stone and its head piece with its inscription noted thereon that it was presented by King Mahabali Banadhi Raja Uranga Villidasan Samarakolahalan (1464 A.D.) is an interesting relic.

The iron lamp excavated from the garden of the Lord in 1938, the quaint copper box, the intriguing wooden box scooped out of a single block of wood would speak of the ages and the stages of man's evolution of his civilisation.

The sandal fan and Chamaram reputed to have been presented by Thirumal Nayak, and preserved in a modest covering reminds one of the fragrant days of the Nayak dynasty.

The cannon balls now innocuously lying here seem to plead a vicarious guilt and appear to submit their mute and material evidence for the cause of the destruction of this ancient city, the vandalistic destruction of its arts and treasures and the spoliations of its wealth and riches all reminding us of an eternal Kurukshetra warfare between the good and the evil in man in all climes and times.

Kanikkais and offerings of sorts selected and gathered here form an interesting study. It would be worth-while to note the various kinds of offerings and Kanikkais made to the Lord here. A look at them makes one ponder over their aetiology and strive to find out what is the sacrifice or offering the Lord expects us to make.

Unique as have been the Carvings in stones, paintings in colour, and the representation of the dance and the drama in the friezes of the temple, the carvings in wood on the doors of the Thondaman Gopuram and the ivory carvings of the Sayyadesa already referred to, all these are nothing when compared to the designs in the 'Muthu - Padutha' referred to elsewhere.

Next one may see that quaint priestess in bronze with a lamp in one hand and trident in another challenging as it were the visitor to discover the identity of her nationality, but sphinx-like vouchsafing no answer to savants that dare to probe into her closely veiled past history. Scholars are not agreed as to her nationality.* Some think her to be a Roman, some a Greek and others a Phoenician, an Assyrian or an Egyptian. This small idol was discovered in a garden of the Lord. What is the reason for the existence of an idol of a Mediterranean lady in the grounds of the Alagar Temple area one may ask. Ancient South Indian history supplies the answer. Just as Hinduism and Buddhism and the Indian culture spread once throughout the whole world practically as already noticed, our trade, civilisation and colonisation also flourished in distant lands in those distant times.

Reference to Yavana images holding lamps in their hands are constantly met with in the ancient Tamil Classics also.

“யவனரியற்றிய வினேமாண்பாவை கையேந்தையகல்.....”

Manimekalai XIX Ch. 107-9.

“யவனப்பரவையணிவிளக்கு” Perungadai I-171-175 (Referred to in “The History of the Tamils” P. 316). The trade which South India carried on in ancient days with the Romans, the Greeks and the Egyptians who were known to us as Yavanas in general and with various other nations as referred to by Sri P. T. S. Iyengar in his “History of the Tamils” was phenomenal as noticed below.

The discovery of the Indian teak in the ruins of UR (Mugheir), the Sumerian capital (IV Millennium B. C.), is referred to by Professor Sayce in the “Hibbert Lectures” pages 136-138. In the inscriptions of Harkhuf (B. C. 2600), in the writings of Theophrastus (IV century B. C.) and in Virgil's Georgics (II. 116) reference to the fondness of the Pharaohs and the Egyptians to the Indian ebony is made. While the inscriptions of the great Assyrian monarch Tiglath Pileser III and the inscription in the Obelisk of Shalmeneser III (860 B. C.) speak of various articles of Indian import. Indian rose wood, sandal wood, agil, etc., were great favourites in the west and especially in Rome. Whether in the Babylonian Capital or in the Roman capital our Urayure cloth famous even in those days and known as “Argaru” in Rome or as “Sindhu” or “Sadin” in Babylon or as “Karpas” in Greece (Sanskrit-Karpasa), and various other kinds of Indian cotton fabrics with Indian designs were very highly popular. Historians refer to Sennacherib's (704-681 B. C.) planting of cotton in his palace gardens; Herodotus (450 B. C.) refers to Indian cotton being imported into his country. The discovery of Egyptian mummies being wrapped up in Indian muslins and the discovery of ancient Indian fabrics in Memphis and other places are now universally known. The Edicts of Diocletian referred to the mattresses and pillows stuffed with Indian cotton. Sebni the royal officer of Pepi II (XXVI century B. C.) records the imports of incense and tusks, clothing and hides from India. Indian ivory was another favourite with those nations; so were the peacock feathers (Hebrew ‘Thukki’, Tamil “Thogai”) etc.

Indian spices of various sorts were indispensable in the Roman, Grecian, Hebrew, and Egyptian house holds. Among the imports into these countries from India were pepper, "Yavana Priya", as it was called, because it was so dear to the Romans or Yavanas or "the Indian Remedy" as Hippocrates (V Century B. C.) would call it, gingelly oil, cocoanut oil, tamarind, rice, millet, and a variety of other articles. Strabo, (25 B. C.) the historian, called our jaggery "Honey obtained from trees in India without the aid of Bees". Our cocoanuts were articles of curiosity to the ancient Greeks which they carefully preserved in the Greek temples. Sophocles speaks of our "rice cakes" or "தேநாசை". Our Alagar Hill Dosais are stated to have been once preserved for weeks together. The works of Sophocles, Aristophanes and other Hellenese authors disclose many South Indian articles such as Oryza (அரிசி), Karpion (கருவாப்பட்டை) Ziggiberos (இஞ்சி), Peperi (பிப்பிலி), Beryllos (வைஞ்சிரியம்) of Coimbatore etc. etc. While coming to the luxuries, the elite of the society of these nations above mentioned were fond of the Indian pets such as dogs, monkeys, hounds etc. Indian hunting dogs were one of the most favourite items of import from India. In the procession of Ptolemy I called Philadelphus (B. C. 285-246) a number of Indian articles and curios were made to pass through or carried. While in the battlefield, Indian Elephants were used in European and African Wars, Pyrrhus transported Indian Elephants into Italy in 28 B. C. Hasdrubal at Panormos in 25 B. C. and Hannibal and Hasdrubal in the Second Punic War with Rome were using not only Indian Elephants but also Indian Mahouts. At the battle of Rapia, Ptolemy's Libyan beasts could not stand against the Indian troops of Antiochos."

Needless to mention that they imported also our Diamonds from Muziri and Nilcynda (Golconda) as well as our Agate, Carnelian, Sard, Onyx, Bloodstone, Rock-crystal glasses, Ruby, Sapphire, Beryl etc. The Ptolemies, Metilla, Cleopatra all knew, the worth, value and charms of the Indian pearl.

Indian Papyrus was being used in the west in the 3rd century B. C.

While Indian and especially the Pandya Nad thus exported innumerable articles to these various countries, her needs from other countries were but small and consequently her imports few. From China she imported Chinam or Silk and Chini or sugar showing the Chinese origin of these two articles. Mahabaratha mentions the arrival of Chinese silk from China as one of the tributes to Yudhishtira. From Rome she imported only some Roman wine for the use of the Roman colony settled at Madura and possibly at Alagar Hills and flourishing here to a considerable extent in the many *யவனச் சேரிகள்* referred to in Jivaka Chintamani, Manimekalai, Perungadai etc. (History of the Tamils 312—317.) The other import being Roman coins of gold and silver and some coins of copper. Gold and Copper coins of Rome are stated to have been found at Sri Alagar Hills also. Consequent upon such a voluminous trade, Imperial Rome in the time of Augustus (30. B. C.) had according to Warmington, from the very start being unable to counter balance the inflow of Indian products by a return of Imperial products had to send out coined money which never returned back to them. Pliny has stated (70 A. D.) that Roman Gold to an extent of one million pounds a year was being drained by India while India sold her wares to Rome at 100 times (?) at their original cost (Pliny Nat. Hist. VI-26) These international trades apart the colonisation of the Indians in other climes was an established fact. Dion Chrysostum's reference to a colony of Brhmins in Alexandria in 100 A. D. has already been noticed. From these it would be clearly seen that though the Yavana Priestess in the Sundararaja Museum, a holding lamp in her hand, might have been a gift to our Temple by some one of the devout Yavanas from some one of the many Yavana Cheris (cheri was a Roman colony) that might have flourished in or some where near the fort of Alagapuri or some

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portions in Madura, it would be too much to say that our arts and sciences were inspired by the Yavanas as some ignorantly surmise.



श्री:

Pious Reader,

These introductory notes to the study of the history and greatness of this sacred Kshetra have been compiled rather on a superficial survey of the vast and valuable materials which could have afforded ample and splendid opportunities for savants and scholars for writing out regular historical treatises on this famous City, Fort and Temple. These notes put forth no claim to any deep or critical research. Having been noted rather in a hurried manner, when I was hard pressed for time, in an Institution whose day to day administration has been an anxious care and problem of a tremendous magnitude, and where the work involved in the encounter and removal of obstructions not only from various vested interests but even from strange and unexpected quarters has been greater than what was contributed to works of a constructive nature, as those acquainted with the affairs of this institution so well know. I am painfully conscious of many and innumerable mistakes and defects in them. Though there is no originality in these notes, and devoid as it is of any literary merit or embellishment, my chief aim in this compilation

has been to rouse an interest in the reader and the devotee. for a study of the history of these Stalas, the more important of which are more or less miniature kingdoms whose long and continuous histories social, spiritual and political do for aeons and aeons together abound with soul absorbing and thrilling episodes and incidents, which have contributed to the Cultural and Spiritual greatness of Brata Varsha which has been occupying a unique and pre-eminent position ever since the dawn of human knowledge and civilisation. May be, these notes have been rather long and tiresome to a degree. But an urge to have the more salient features of this ancient Stala with the varied references to the same, not only in the hoary Puranas and Ithihasas of yore but also in some of the most ancient classics and inscriptional records thousands of years old, brought to the notice of the earnest student and devotee, has been rather persistent in my mind. For obvious reasons which need no recapitulation here every phase of the pristine glory and greatness of this Divine Sanctuary of Thirumalirunjolai or Alagapuri with its forts, fortresses, and battlements, its mystic, magnetic and soul absorbing shrines and subshrines and its innumerable Sangams, Manrams and Vidhya Pitas or Gurukulas, and various other brilliant institutions flourishing there, have all been fast vanishing into the oblivion. Before we are absolutely deprived of this our precious heritage, does it not therefore behove every one of us to see in this age of National Renaissance, when the whole world is undergoing a change to a New Order and when we are turning over a new page in our history as it were, that Brata Varsha regains once more its proud and privileged place among the comity of Nations as the cultural and spiritual leader *par excellence* in this warring world of crime, chaos and confusion? Has not the Lord assured this anxious world thus?

"For the protection of the Good, for the destruction of the evil doers and for firmly establishing the Dharma or Righteousness in this mortal world from age to age am I born."

परिवाणाय साधूनां विनाशाय च दुष्कृतां ।

धर्मं संस्थापनार्थाय सम्भवामि युगे युगे ॥

—Bag. Gita. Ch. IV S. 8.

As if in fulfilment of this assurance, the Lord has again reappeared as Sri Rama and Sri Krishna in the new and beautiful edifices recently constructed due to the munificence of certain devotees at the entrance to the main temple, the original shrines for them, much extolled in the classics having disappeared years ago. Darsan of the lord as Sri Rama and Sri Krishna is here afforded to us, His devotees, charming the eyes, gladdening our hearts and maddening our minds, and merging us all in an ocean of bliss as it were, in a soul enthralling manner, the like of which can rarely be met with any where else. Their Darsan seems to remind us also of a duty neglected, a duty atonce supreme and sacred, a duty we owe to God and men, in contributing our quota towards the restoration of things to their pristine spirit and glory by reviving all the shrines and institutions for which Thirumalirunjolaimalai was once so much famed. Pious Reader ! towards the discharge of this great and sacred duty, may I in all humility and devotion appeal to you to remember the oft parodied injunction

दानपालनयोर्मध्ये दानात् श्रेयोऽनुपालनम् ।

दानात् स्वर्गमवाप्नोति पालनादच्युतं पदम् ॥

and translate your faith and piety to Lord Alagar in a concrete form by attempting to make this holy Kshetra regain in a measure at least its ancient greatness and pre-eminence and to

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kindle such a desire in the reader has been the main object of this introduction ?

May the All Merciful Lord bless us all.

ओं तत् सत्.

